North Bi Northwest

The Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network,
a member project of Gay Community Social Services

June/July 1991 Volume 4, Number 3

Seattle Bisexual Men's Union flourishing and active

by ben e factory

1991 is turning out to be a year of flourishing develpment and activity for the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union (SBMU). The Valentine's Day AIDS Awareness Party at Re-Bar, which we co-hosted with SBWN and the People of Color Against AIDS Network (POCAAN), drew between 150 and 200 people and was our largest education/ outreach social to date. The raps by Shelia Robinson and Victor Rivera of POCAAN and Nancy Joyrich of SBWN as well as yours truly, spoke of the links among people of color, women, bisexuals, and lower-income people in the struggle against AIDS and the bigoted misguidedness of opinion and policy that say AIDS is a middle-class gay white male disease. Helen's world-beat DJ work musically underscored our words on the importance of bringing together our community's diversity. It was hot!

At the Sunday topic night of March 10, following the Re-Bar event, Wirza Stoakly, an African-American SBMU activist, facilitated a discussion on "Bisexuality in communities of color." March also saw the Bi-Out Speaker Collective's first gigs take place at the University of Washington, with Dale Nelson coordinating efforts and speaking for SBMU. Dale also produced a well-done mailing brochure for Bi-Out which he and Joan Hill sent out in April as a bulk mailing to local lesbian, gay, and other community groups, and to schools, unions, congregations, etc. April's discussion focussed on "Bi visibility and Politics," with us concurring that there is a more inclusive "queer consciousness" rising in the ranks of the lesbian, gay, and bi community. Queer Nation is one of the

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North American Multicultural Bisexual Network Conference: Seattle, July 13-14

Seattle will be hosting the second planning meeting for the North American Multicultural Bisexual Network (NAMBN) this summer, July 13 and 14. In addition to the meeting, which will draw bisexual activists from across the U.S. and Canada, there will also be workshops, potlucks and parties.

The event is being jointly organized by the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union and the (temporarily) San Francisco based NAMBN. Between 100 and 150 people are expected to attend.

To register, call the Bi-Phone at 783-7987. We also need people locally who can put up folks from out of town, and help with organizing the events. Call and leave a message to get involved. This should be an exciting mid-summer festival.

North Bi Northwest

Subscribe!

Standard Rate: $10/year.
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Additional donations are welcome.

Gay Community Social Services
Seattle Bisexual Women's Network
P.O. Box 30645
Greenwood Station
Seattle, WA 98103-0645
(206) 783-7987

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How did you hear about us?_____

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Deadline for the next issue: **July 15.**

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SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of feminists working to create a bisexual support network and to promote equality for bisexual people in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay communities. We regard ourselves as part of the larger sexual minority community, and consider the fight for lesbian/gay rights to be our own. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political or economic coercion. We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexuality. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. While we work with men on issues of common interest, our group is exclusively female to keep the concerns of women in the forefront of our work.

The discrimination we face as women and as sexual minorities is only one facet of oppression: all bigotry is our enemy. We stand behind the racial and ethnic liberation movements and the struggle for economic equality. However, in any work we do, feminism and the interests of women will be our central concern.

Calendar

Please note: topics are tentative. Call the bi-phone at 783-7987 to check.

June 3 Newcomers Group 7:15pm.

June 8 Polyifi Potluck 7:00 at the LRC 322-DYKE

June 9 Topic Night: **Safe Sex Workshop** by the Northwest AIDS Foundation. 6:00-9:00. No business meeting, don't come late!

June 17 Newcomers Group 7:15pm

June 23 Support/check-in meeting 6:00pm.

June 29 **Northwest Bi Fest** dinner and party. Call the bi-phone for more information

June 30 **Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Pride Day!** Meet us at the Parade (look for the enormous pink and blue banner) and the come to the after-Pride picnic potluck behind the Art Museum at 6:00. See you there.

July 1 Newcomers group 7:15pm.

July 7 Support/check-in meeting 6:00pm.

July 13 **North American Multicultural Bisexual Network Planning Conference.** Pilgrim Congregational Church (on Broadway). Call the bi-phone for more information.

July 13 Polyfi Potluck at the LRC 7:00

July 15 Newcomers Group 7:15 pm

July 21 Topic night, call the bi phone to check

July 26 Newsletter stuffing party 7:00

July 29 Newcomers Group 7:15pm

A Question of Labeling

Opinion *by Susanna Trnka*

When I was in high school it was pretty simple. I knew I was attracted to both men and women but I also knew that the Virginia suburbs were not a place where I wanted to voice this, not yet. I really didn't go through any confusion about my sexuality until I came to college. Ironically, I thought that being at Berkeley would let me voice the feelings I had kept silent for so long, but I found myself speechless. I lacked the language, the label necessary to identify myself.

I started out simply calling myself "bisexual." To me, it meant that I have physical and emotional attachments to both men and women. Most of the women I met at so-called "lesbian/bisexual/questioning womyn's groups" accepted me and my bisexuality until they discovered that I actually am what I say. I'm not the woman who goes out only with other women but can see herself somewhere in the distant future having a relationship with a man. I'm not the woman who last slept with a man five years ago and now identifies herself as a lesbian separatist. Nor am I the fence-sitting woman who hides her singular attraction to women under the banner of bisexuality. I have physical and emotional relationships with both men and women; I thought that being bisexual was that simple.

But as I spoke to self-identified lesbians, lesbian/feminists, bisexual women and men, and gay men, I got more confused. Some lesbians, I discovered, sleep with men. And some gay men have sexual relationships with women. But they would never think of calling themselves "bisexual." Why not? Political reasons, they said. They identify themselves as lesbian/gay and they belong in the lesbian/gay movement. My lesbian friends stress that they are women-identified women and that they don't buy into the privilege of aligning themselves with men by calling themselves bisexual. Reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that "as an erotic 'perversion,' feminine homosexuality may elicit a smile; but as implying a mode of life, it arouses contempt or scandalized disapproval,"1 they explain that patriarchal society condemns the lesbian because she asserts she can be successful, she can be happy without a man. Society ignores the bisexual woman since she still "needs" a man, she can still be controlled.

I've heard self-identified bisexuals say exactly that; they claim to have two sides of themselves, one that needs to be close to a man, the other that needs to be close to a woman. Then there is the opposing camp of bisexuals who say we should love people and that it doesn't matter if we love a man or a woman.

I disagree. Thank you, but I would do just fine if men disappeared from the face of the earth. As a feminist, I think it makes a huge difference in this society whether a woman loves a man or a woman. Her status, her rights, her freedom is altered by who she loves. It shouldn't be, but it is.

Sexuality is clearly political, but should we define our sexuality in purely political terms? The 1970s Radicalesbians collective claimed in their essay, "The woman-identified woman," that "lesbian" is a political term.2 It is an identity that can be taken on by any woman who wants to subvert the patriarchy, no matter who she sleeps with. Along similar lines, Adrienne Rich's "lesbian continuum" claims that all women are lesbians in the sense that they all interact in ways that nurture their relationships to other women.3 Since the Kinsey report showed that most Americans have some sexual interaction with members of both sexes, isn't it irrelevant what kind of a descriptive label we slap onto our sexuality? Isn't it only the political label that carries any significance?

As my politics were leading me away from calling myself "bisexual," so was my personal life; I was beginning to feel the effects of "biphobia." A self-identified "bisexual" woman never called me again after she found out I have a male lover. A gay male friend frowned at me and didn't say hello when he saw me walking down the street hand in hand with my boyfriend. At work I got a lot of hostility from a lesbian editor when I suggested that I review an anthology of writings by lesbians. She asked how I could claim to have any knowledge about lesbian culture and then attacked me for my perspective of "bisexual privilege."

Feeling confused and betrayed by the lesbian/gay community that I felt so close to, I came to the conclusion that as a woman who believes in and practices feminist politics, I should call myself a lesbian. I sighed with relief; I thought I had solved the matter and could now go on with more important things than trying to squeeze myself into some category. But it wasn't that easy. I began to feel like I was hiding. I was closeting myself again, this time as a lesbian. Political theories aside, how can I possibly introduce myself to a women's group as a lesbian if I currently have a primary relationship with a man? The idea began to seem more and more ridiculous, and hypocritical. I was lost again, without a language, without a name.

Why is it so important? Why do you need to label yourself, a friend asked. The answer is simply that I know what I'm not. I'm not heterosexual, and I'm sick of

continued on page 13

An old bottle for old wine: Selecting the right label

Opinion ⊷ *by M. S. Montgomery*

When I was twelve, I secretly studied my father's copy of Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual behavior in the human male* (1948), where, in the section on "Bisexuality," I carefully examined a diagram of the famous Scale and read with interest that "nearly half (46%) of the [male] population engages in both heterosexual and homosexual activities, or reacts to persons of both sexes, in the course of their adult lives." (656) Two years later (in 1963) I furtively bought the only paperback on sexual orientation in Tucson, Edmund Bergler's infamous Homosexuality: Disease or way of life? (1956), which informed me in a chapter entitled "Does bisexuality exist?" that "bisexuality—a state that has no existence beyond the word itself—is an out-and-out fraud, involuntarily maintained by some naive homosexuals, and voluntarily perpetrated by some who are not so naive. "Some "homosexuals," the psychiatrist continued, "are occasionally capable of lustless mechanical sex (his italics) with a woman....They tend to marry as a means of proving to themselves and especially to the environment that they are completely normal." (89) Another two years on, I tried to talk about my latest girlfriend with my buddy Rob (whom I'd come on to sexually several times, with limited success), only to have him respond, "If you like girls now, Mike, you must be a lesbian." I understood immediately what he was implying about my gender identity—and his wit earned an appreciative if uncomfortable laugh—but the experience suddenly deepened by several fathoms more my sense that the question of my "real" sexual orientation wasn't going to be an easy matter for me to sort out.

Over the next three years, in a concentrated effort to deduce from definitions and situational responses "what I was," I experimented rigorously, engaging in sexual relations with about an equal number of females and males. (Was that last night lustless mechanical sex, or what?) I considered, but rejected, the "bisexual" label. Only one person I knew identified herself that way, and there was no bisexual community. Nor could I conceptualize being or feeling bisexual: the mental picture of myself in bed with a man and a woman at the same time made me limp with imaginative overload; when I was being sexual with a girl or woman I felt heterosexual, and when having sex with a boy or man I identified as homosexual. Too, I believed that to feel homosexual feelings at all was complication enough and theorized that the adoption of a "bisexual lifestyle" (whatever that might mean) would be unworkable in practice. I had enough difficulty in those years stringing together a continuous series of months with one person, let alone with the two people that bisexuality seemed minimally to require. Everybody involved, I was certain, would be either jealous or confused or both.

The watershed came when I was 19 and my fiancee broke up with me after I confided to her my seduction of a male friend of my freshman roommate's. A couple of months later I joined the campus homophile group and experienced "accepting myself as a gay man" as a definitive rite of passage. In that largely essentialist environment, I persuaded myself that Bergler, so egregiously wrong about homosexuality as a disease, was nevertheless right, at least in my case, about the fraudulence of bisexuality: henceforth, I vowed, I would no longer pretend to heterosexuality. So for the next decade sex with men sufficed.

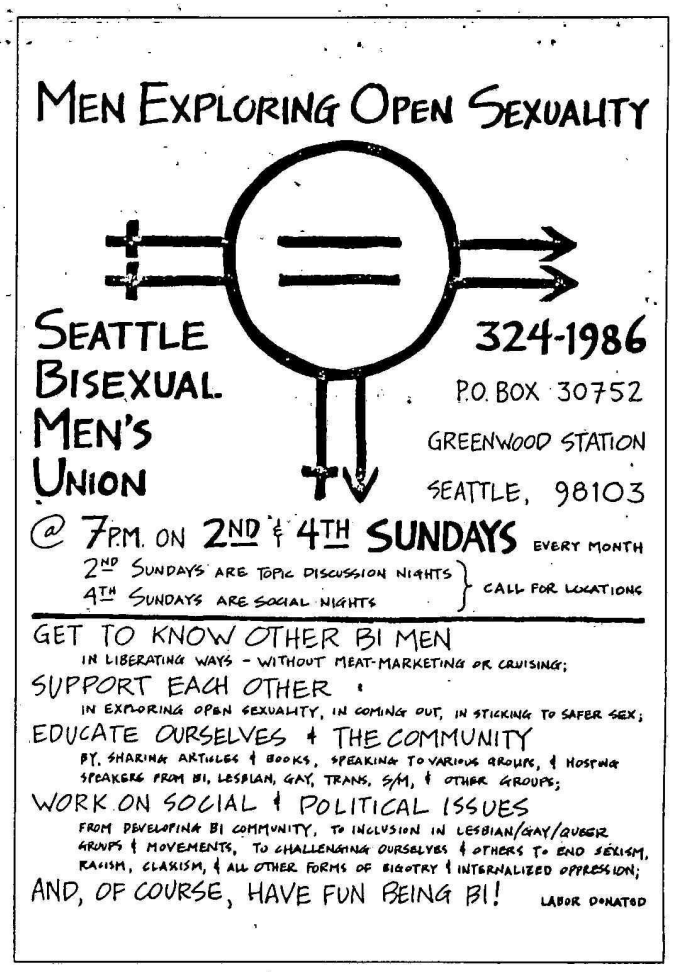
Or almost sufficed—except for the occasional woman I slept with. I was, in those times, a fairly easy lay, and I seldom refused any attractive man or woman who fell into my lap—although afterward I sometimes asked myself why I, a gay man, had gone along with the women. It was somewhat to my surprise, therefore, when it became evident that one of these women was going to be my life-partner. I tried to warn her off on our first date, but fortunately I was unsuccessful. The marriage has succeeded because of several truths we established between us on that date: that I had a perennial, perdurable sexual attraction to men, that sexual jealousy wasn't part of her constitution, and that for two old hippies like us sexual exclusiveness would not be a desideratum. In fact, however, from 1979 to 1986, with new fathering pleasures and responsibilities and a new career to occupy me, and with mysterious new diseases devastating the community of gay men, I had sex with

no one else. During this period I would have described myself as a happily, heterosexually married gay man who chose not to sleep with men.

Five years ago I decided I wanted a major man in my life again, and for the past four years I have had a male lover (also contentedly married to a woman), whom I see once a week or so. This friend identifies himself as "ambisexual," but under the joyful, comfortable influence of my relationships with him and with her I have recently taken up and dusted off the old "bisexual" label that I first encountered in Kinsey thirty years ago and had neglected or rejected since.

I find that several of Kinsey's demurs regarding the term still make sense to me: that if the word is taken to imply that bisexual persons are anatomically, physiologically, or psychologically part male and partly female, or both at once, then its use is indeed "rather unfortunate"; and that "the term as it has been used has never been strictly delimited, and consequently it is impossible to know whether it refers to all individuals who rate anything from 1 [predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual] to 5 [the reverse], or whether it is being limited to some smaller number of categories, perhaps centering around 3." (656-658) If one takes the 1-5 range as definitive, then the label is wildly imprecise and uninformative (however politically expedient); if the range were arbitrarily narrowed to, say, 2.5 to 3.5, then my lover would judge the lower limit too high for him to qualify, and I the upper limit too low.

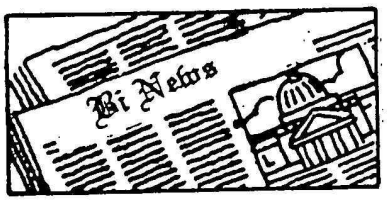
Still, I find that the label works for me today when, as sometimes happens, I need one. Thinking inductively, synthetically—taking into account my thousands of varied fantasies, erections, and orgasms, and the genders of my various friends, tricks, and lovers over the years, and the several identities and lifestyles I have sequentially if not simultaneously adopted—I find that no word but "bisexual" describes accurately and succinctly both my past history and my present way of life. Its very breadth and imprecision, it seems to me now, are great strengths: it is the only descriptor flexible enough to cover the case of one whose numbers on the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid span nearly the entire range. It obviates awkward constructions like, "I'm married, but" and "I'm mainly gay, but" with "I'm bisexual"; the but disappears and can be replaced by and if my interlocutor wishes to continue the conversation. It is the word I now find slipping most easily from my lips at work, as I slowly come out there in the service of the campus les/bi/gay community, and it is the word it seemed most natural to use when I first discussed my sexuality with my then nine-year-old son.


MEN EXPLORING OPEN SEXUALITY
SEATTLE BISEXUAL MEN'S UNION
324-1986
P.O. BOX 30752
GREENWOOD STATION
SEATTLE, 98103
@ 7PM. ON 2ND & 4TH SUNDAYS EVERY MONTH
2ND SUNDAYS ARE TOPIC DISCUSSION NIGHTS
4TH SUNDAYS ARE SOCIAL NIGHTS
CALL FOR LOCATIONS
GET TO KNOW OTHER BI MEN
IN LIBERATING WAYS - WITHOUT MEAT-MARKETING OR CRUISING;
SUPPORT EACH OTHER
IN EXPLORING OPEN SEXUALITY, IN COMING OUT, IN STICKING TO SAFER SEX;
EDUCATE OURSELVES & THE COMMUNITY
BY SHARING ARTICLES & BOOKS, SPEAKING TO VARIOUS GROUPS, & HOSTING SPEAKERS FROM BI, LESBIAN, GAY, TRANS, S/M, & OTHER GROUPS;
WORK ON SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES
FROM DEVELOPING BI COMMUNITY, TO INCLUSION IN LESBIAN/GAY/QUEER GROUPS & MOVEMENTS, TO CHALLENGING OURSELVES & OTHERS TO END SEXISM, RACISM, CLASISM, & ALL OTHER FORMS OF BIGOTRY & INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION;
AND, OF COURSE, HAVE FUN BEING BI!
LABOR DONATED

It is also a label that I observe being adopted by an increasing number of persons whose attitudes toward sexuality (and sometimes whose lives) show a close family resemblance to my own. There is now a developing community—not just isolated partnerships and encounters. Now there are bisexual gatherings and groups, phone-sex lines and electronic BBSs, periodicals and books, and inevitably, theories, ideologies, and agendas.

Since I began writing for the gay and lesbian press in 1986, and more recently as I have become active locally, part of my own agenda has been to promote awareness and acceptance of a variety of alternative lifestyles and sexual self-images. Both the feminist and gay liberation movements benefit, it seems to me, from anything that widens support by discouraging antipodal thinking about men vs women, gays vs straights, or lesbians vs gay men. For this purpose the notion of a "bisexual identity" is elegantly constructed. I have watched self-righteous fanatics—essentialist fundies and exclusionists and separatists and segregationists—squirm or change color when the b-word is uttered; and I have smiled to see it. "Bisexual" (like "racial integrationist" and perhaps "bisexual feminist") is the rare label that subsumes the goal of social inclusiveness. The term may be a transitional one, for the language or for me, but it feels comfortable to me today, and I'm going to continue using it for a while.

MS Montgomery lives in Princeton, NJ.



Although NBC claimed that nothing more could come of "the kiss" between Abby and CJ on "LA Law" earlier this season, something did. In that episode, after working together intensely on a case for several weeks, CJ kissed Abby, not once but twice. Abby freaked out and ran off (what a fool). Later they talked and Abby said she was confused about..."My flexibility...?" interrupted CJ. At last, a bisexual character on a hit tv show.

In the second-to-last episode of the season, Abby asked CJ out to dinner ("like a date," as she put it) and in the next episode, after a cozy meal and some wine, was rejected by CJ, who said she didn't think they should pursue the relationship because she didn't want to be part of Abby's experimentation. We can only hope that the first bisexual relationship on tv will get pursued just a little further next season.

Gretchen Phillips, lead singer and writer for the wildly popular lesbian rock group **Two Nice Girls**, came out as bisexual at her concert in Seattle this fall. During the set she commented that the song she was about to sing was a true story. It was about loving women but also loving a man. She's also the composer of their college-circuit hit, "I spent my last ten dollars on birth control and beer," the next line of which is, "Life was so much simpler when I was sober and queer."

We're also ecstatic to note that the guitarist for **Two Nice Girls** is Meg Hentges, formerly of the all-womens band **The Neo Boys** from Portland (ca. 1981), and a group Beth has held a torch for all these years. Now if she could only find their bassist.

Rumors generated by the tossaway line at the end of the (in)famous "Bisexuals: Deluded closet cases or vanguards of the movement?" article in the New York gay weekly *OutWeek* that lesbian music idol Ferron (*Testimony, Shadows on a dime*, and the recently released *Phantom center*) is seeing a man are not true. She is still a lesbian, thank you very much, and is much distressed by this assertion. Somewhat along the lines of the old stereotype that anyone who hangs with queers must be queer, the rumor seems to have begun because she has male musicians in her band. We guess lesbians can't have male friends. Her lawyers are in contact with the magazine.

The authors of the *Encyclopedia of homosexuality*, winner of a Lambda Gay and Lesbian Book Award, are currently compiling a *Gay and lesbian studies handbook*. Co-author Stephen Donaldson, who has a strong interest in bisexual issues, plans to include chapters on the emerging bisexual movement and the politics of bisexuality.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission has invited bisexual activists to join the first US delegation of queer activists to visit Moscow and Leningrad. Leading Soviet gay and lesbian activists have requested international support and have invited US activists to come to the USSR to work together. Lani Kaahumanu of the Bay Area Bisexual Network is coordinating this effort. Fundraising is under way.

The New England Association of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists recently voted 12-6 to become the New England Association of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Psychologists. A move to change the national organization's name is under way and will be decided in San Francisco this summer. They expect fireworks.

Georgia O'Keeffe, whose sensuous flower posters from the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival adorn walls throughout dykedom and bi-dom, turns out to bebi herslef. In her new book, *O'Keeffe and Steiglitz: An American romance*, author Benita Eisler chronicles O'Keeffe's affairs with both Mable/el Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan, her husband. Later, O'Keeffe and her husband Alfred Steiglitz both became lovers with Rebecca Strand, wife of photographer Paul Strand. In its review, the *New York Times* notes, "In the book's index under **Affairs**, O'Keeffe surpasses Steiglitz by eight to fout, bisexually giving her a numerical advantage."

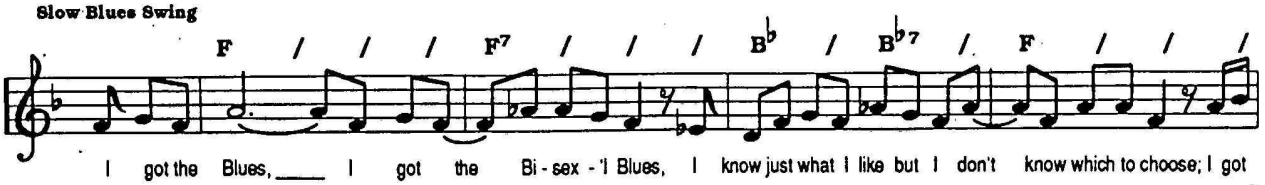
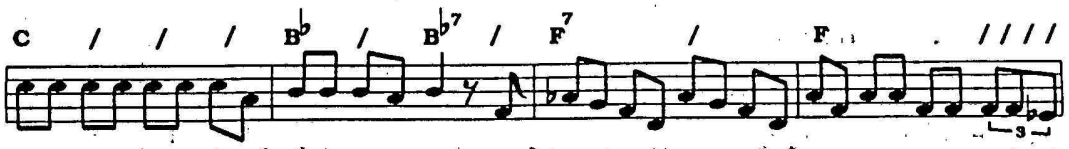
Feminists and gay groups across the country are protesting the movie *Basic instinct*, which is currently filming in Los Angeles. It features a bisexual woman who murderers a rock star. All the leading female characters are either lesbian or bisexual and killers, according to Richard Jennings, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD). "It makes lesbian and bisexual women threatening murderers and the victims straight white men," said Jennings. "There is a complete inability to give any sort of balance here." Paul Verhoeven, the film's director (*Robocop, Total recall*) defended the project as a psychological thriller about a police detective investigating a series of brutal, baffling murders: "It is not a negative depiction of lesbians and bisexuals." At least they acknowledge that bisexuals exist. Too bad they picture us as violent, man-hating murderers.

AAA of Washington state has agreed to extend its requrements for "associate" member ship to include domestic partners and other residents of a "primary" member's household, in response to a human rights complaint brought by a Seattle gay man. Seattle law prohibits marital status discrimination in public accommodations.

To end on a positive note, the University of California at Santa Cruz has not just one but five bisexual or lesbigay organizations on campus, including Bi Women for Women, Looking Both Ways, BALI (Bisexual and Loving Individuals), Sappho (lesbian and bi women), and Stonewall (gay, bi, and supportive straight men). In addition, USCS sponsors gay/lesbian/bisexual "theme" housing for students, just as they have Russian, Chinese, and multicultural dorms. ❧

The Bi Bi Blues

Words and music by Kathleen Hepburn

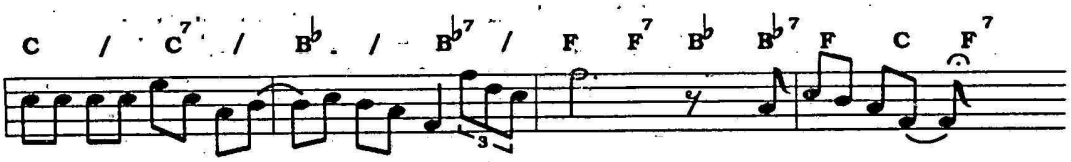
Slow Blues Swing

I got the Blues,____ I got the Bi - sex - 'l Blues, I know just what I like but I don't know which to choose; I got

1. this one on my left and I got that one on my right,__ but who to spend my life with, or even just the night, it gives me the
2. she or he or him or her I tell you I don't care,__ they all look fine to me, they just got different underwear, and I got the
3. Which crowd to hang out with, or who to try to please, I tell you all that kind or nonsense can just bring me to my knees and give me the
4. who or why I am I tried to find it in a book;___ when I thought I had it figured out I took another look and I sang the
5. friends, my lovers, well they all get intertwined,__ and I might lose some platonic friends if they could read my mind, I'd be singin' the

Blues,_____ the Choosin' - Gets - Confusin' Blues._____ 2. Is it Well I

Blues,_____ the Sittin' - on - the - Fence Blues._____

Blues,_____ the Middle - of - the - Road Blues._____ 4. Just

Blues,_____ the Passion - Is - Irrational Blues._____ 5. My

Blues,_____ the Cruisin' - for - a - Bruisin' Blues*._____

know just what I like but I don't know which to choose, I got the Blues_____ The Bi Bi Bi Blues _____.

* Please hold your hand over your heart as you sing this line, to imply that you are referring to an emotional "bruisin'." I do not in any way want to encourage the idea of physical violence in response to a bisexual orientation.

Bi Bi Blues © 1991 by Kathleen Hepburn. This song may be performed or reproduced without my expressed written consent, unless it is for profit, in which case you must first obtain my permission in writing.
This is a work in progress. Please feel free to suggest additional verses or changes in the lyrics.
Kathleen Hepburn, c/o BBWN, 338 Newbury Street, Suite 202C, Boston, MA 02115

Comparisons 1

The best of both worlds? No, I'd hesitate
to say it. If suburban home and lawn,
a herd of healthy kids, a loving mate
who greets me smiling every day at dawn,
or alternately wild and tender sex
with you, dear ,man, commitment to our cause
of equal rights, or growth in this complex
existence are the best, then yes. I pause,
however, at what might denote the worst:
the fears of falseness, hatred, and disease;
of shipwrecked sailors buoyed by saline seas.
Tell me: is your worst worse? your best much better?
Can freedom be defined by length of fetter?

M. S. Montgomery

We'll sit and watch our winter fire burn,
and, fraught and formal, I will say to him,
"There's something now you're old enough to learn";
or, shooting baskets in the schoolhouse gym,
some crass, officious kid will tell him that
his dad—who'd heard it God-knows-where—had told
him, and my nescient son will glare him flat.
It's possible the story will unfold
more gently: he'll infer it from my books
and overheard remarks my wife and I
will make and carelessly unguarded looks
between the man and me. I'll dignify
him with this truth, this secret I can't keep,
and as I've sown with him, I'll also reap.

M. S. Montgomery

Never straight & narrow

never straight & narrow
nor heterodox & opportune
single instances of
ethnomethodological drag & cruise
no coupling
neither nor
loving men
how oxymoronic
giving til it hurts
it hurts every time
will you take every time til I turn
the texture of jade
without its cold color
or past tense

gentlemen,
the roses of your dreams
nevertheless have thorns
not to propose domestication
but why the props of romanticism?
desire's not a colony of prosthetics
your hand is a glove
your cock a dildo
& you smell of the plantation
shady rubber trees, mint juleps, &
flesh whipped raw.
animal buddha nature
needs no discipline
so why do we?
out of the picture
every picture
i fill my skin
& touch you.

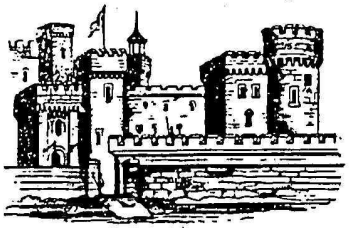
ben e factory

Love unbound

mauve portals crescendo
words cascading tongue weave
mutual skin blooms
with scents of fruition
engorging grounds raise with saplings
germinating from pitched solitudes
to stand tangent
in iridescent twilight wash
as a grove swaying supple.
we four square with all referents,
& fused each with every,
as Pan's harmonics engulf us
& eyes squint tight
steam waves orange in halo

ben e factory

MIT offers course on bisexuality



The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has become the second university in the United States (and perhaps the world) to offer a bisexual studies course. The first class on bisexuality was offered at the University of California at Berkeley in 1990.

The MIT course, entitled "Contexts and Constructs: Bisexuality," came about as a result of student activism. Rebecca Kaplan, an MIT junior, persuaded the Women's Studies Department to agree to offer a course on the subject, provided that a mutually satisfactory instructor could be located. Robyn Ochs, a founding member of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, was approached and agreed to teach the class. The 19 students in the class (10 women and 9 men) have covered topics including definitions of bisexuality, theories of sexual identity and identity development, oppression theory, images of bisexuals in mainstream society, bisexuality in communities of color, bisexuality from a cross-cultural perspective, legal, social, and public policy issues for bisexuals, bisexuality through the lenses of women's studies and gay studies, bisexuals in lesbian and gay communities, the development of bisexual political identity, and history of bisexual movements in the US and other countries. Using *Bi Any Other Name*(Alyson Press 1991), *Bisexuality: A reader and Sourcebook* (Times Change Press, 1990), and Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence(Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silences*) as the main texts of the course, readings have come from a variety of other sources, ranging from the *Journal of Homosexuality*, to regional bisexual newsletters, to periodicals such as *Newsweek*, *OutWeek*, and the *National Enquirer*.

Seattle Men

continued from page 1

clearest and most vocal expressions of this, and SBWN and SBMU are guiding forces in promoting this inclusiveness and visibility here in Seattle.

Helping this along is the recent attention being drawn by the publishing of *Bi any other name*, and the *Seattle Gay News*' positive reviews of it, as well as interviews with local contributing authors and book-release and -signing parties at the Beyond the Closet Bookstore and the Red and Black Book Collective. April 27 was a notable date for local bi organizing: it was the first joint general planning meeting held by SBWN and SBMU (though it was a chilly day for an outdoor potluck and 99% of the folks who came brought chips or nothing at all—you goombas!). Nevertheless, we shivered out agreements on the following stuff. We're going to hold joint discussions on topics ranging from sexism, racism and other nasty-isms to more enjoyable things like bi-positive liberated erotica. Joan Hill, Paul Talberts, Ed Depicolazuane, and little ol' me will be working on developing an event or two. Beth reiterated that bi men are encouraged to contribute writing, graphics, effort and (of course) money, to *North Bi Northwest*. Joan and Dale reported on Bi-Out!. Ed volunteered to do an outreach table at the Red and Black book party.

Robert Hinrix and I are putting together a social for the North American Multicultural Bisexual Network conference so that bi politicos and party people can get down—mark it in your calendar: July 13, going into the wee hours of Bastille Day. The Conference will be Saturday anbd Sunday, July 13 and 14 at Pilgrim Congregational Church on Broadway. It'll focus on developing a network publication, organizing and outreach materials, regional contacts and coordination, and caucusses of bi women, bi's of color or mixed heritage, bi anarchists, bi cultural workers, bi youth, bi seniors, etc... We really need all of you who can to volunteer to put up some of the 100+ folks we're expecting to come, and to help with childcare and/or rides. Pretty please.

Lastly but not leastly, SBWN and SBMU endorsed the Take Back the Night March and Gay Pride and Freedom Day .

May was a good month: following a warm welcome for Bi-Out at the May Day Queer Nation meeting, we co-sponsored three events with Men of All Colors and Cultures Together, two discussion nights (the 10th and 12th) on "Cross-cultural and historical perspecitives on bisexuality," and a social on May 26. June will involve a lot of preparations for Pride/Freedom Day events (June 30) and for the NAMBN Conference in July. There's plenty of room (and need!) for all you gentle readers to get into it knee-deep. C'mon, you want to see this stuff happen. Right! Ok, then give us a call. SBMU, 324-1986. SBWN, 783-7987.

Planned Parenthood needs you!

The recent Supreme Court ruling which upheld a Bush administraction gag rule restricting any agency which received federal monies from even mentioning abortion will require Planned Parenthood of Washington to lose up to 30% of it's funds. Planned Parenthood refuses to withold information on medical options from women simply because the conservatives have a hold in Congress. Two bills currently before Congress, HR329 in the House and S323 in the Senate, which would remove the gag rule. Call your Senators and Representatives to support these bills, and give what you can to allow Planned Parenthood to keep women's options open.

Planned Parenthood
2211 E. Madison
Seattle, WA 98112
328-7734

Introducing...

Bi-OUT

The **Seattle Bisexual Women's Network** seeks to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexuality. We are a feminist group, working to promote equality for bisexual people in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay communities. We regard ourselves as part of the larger sexual minority community, and consider the fight for lesbian/ gay rights to be our own. We offer weekly meetings with check-in, topic discussion, closed support, and newcomer formats. **SBWN** also publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, North Bi Northwest, with news, articles and opinion pieces of interest to feminists, sexual minority women, and our supporters.

The **Seattle Bisexual Men's Union** is an organization of men working together to create bisexual community. We offer a space for men to explore their sexuality in a non-threatening, non-sexist, pro-feminist environment. We are committed to increasing visibility of bisexuals, and educating people about alternatives to heterosexism, homophobia, and biphobia. Our goals include outreach to people of color, the differently abled and the established sexual minority community. Through bi-weekly meetings and social events, the men of **SBMU** seek to promote cooperation between people of all genders and sexual orientations.

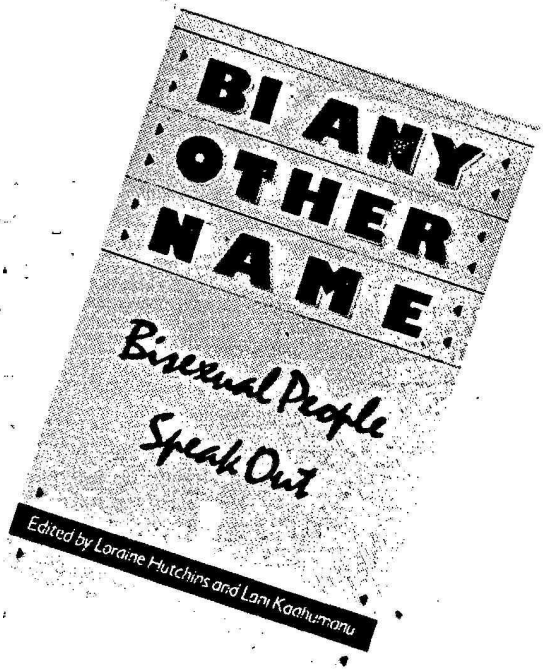
Bi-OUT, a co-project of SBWN & SBMU, is a speakers bureau which has been formed to increase visibility of bisexuals and bisexual issues, both within the sexual minority community and in our culture as a whole. We can provide:

- Accurate information about bisexuality
- Answers to your questions and concerns
- Information about bisexual resources in Seattle and around the USA
- Help with program development for new groups with a bisexual focus
- Assistance for existing groups that wish to include bisexuals in their programs

At last! Two years in the making. It's here, and you can get it at your next group meeting, or at your local bookstore;

Bi any Other Name:

Bisexual People Speak Out



edited by
Loraine Hutchins
and Lani Kaahumanu

Four local authors!

Lenore Norrgard
ben e factory
Beth Reba Weise
Michel Ambrosino

from
Alyson Publications:
11.95

Get your copy at the next Seattle Bisexual Women's Network or Seattle Bisexual Men's Union meeting. Half of the proceeds from each book go to support the work of the Network and the Union. Buy two!

New Mid-Atlantic Bi Network formed

Two regional bisexual groups currently exist in the US, the East Coast Bisexual Network (ECBN) and the recently created North American Multicultural Bisexual Network (NAMBN). A new regional group—the Mid-Atlantic Bisexual Network—has just been formed and will be centered in Wilmington, Deleware. The purpose of the new network will be to provide a means for bisexuals, and the bisexual groups in the mid-atlantic region to communicate with each other and to cooperate on joint projects whenever possible.

According to the network's founder, Barbara Stratton of Wilmington, many bisexuals in the mid-Atlantic area do not feel close enough to Boston to really get involved in the east coast network. "Washington DC and Philadelphia have both recently started major bisexual newsletters, and in Delaware, the new bisexual social group has stirred a lot of interest. I felt it was time we started to work together and create a more unified bisexual voice."

Invitations to join the new network have already been mailed to all of the major bisexual groups in the region. The first project of the network will be to coordinate participation of the numerous bisexual groups in each cities' Gay Pride Day celebrations to be held this summer. The idea of the project was created this past June during the first US National Bisexual Conference, held in San Francisco. Participants from the conference marched together in the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade and were the second largest contingent present.

For more information on the Mid-Atlantic Network, contact Barbara Stratton, 3105 Emerald Pl, Wilmington, DE 19810, (302) 479-5947. ❧

Travel

ONE ADVENTUROUS WOMAN LOOKING FOR ANOTHER TO HEAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY WITH IN MID-JULY

VIA THE SOUTHWEST, SOUTHERN STATES AND UP THE EASTERN SEABOARD, POSSIBLY THE APPALACHIAS AND EASTERN MUSEUMS& ENDS IN **BOSTON**. YOUR INPUT COULD HELP SPECIFY THE ROUTE. WITH A **THREE WEEK** 'SUITCASE' OF TIME, AN EXPERIENCED AND WELL EQUIPPED TRAVELER, A SLEEP-IN-ABLE ISUZU TROOPER NEW ENOUGH TO PROMISE TROUBLE FREE TRAVELS, THERE'S ROOM AND TIME TO FIT IN HIKING TRAILS, SWIMS, PICNICS, NATURE BEING A MAIN ATTRACTION, MUSEUMS, MURALS, BOOKS ON TAPE, SIDE ROADS, SMALL ITEM BARGINS, FRUIT STANDS, DINERS, AND YOUR ADDITIONS TO THE LIST. SELF-DEFENSE KNOWLEDGE IS A PLUS. SAFETY IS SOMETHING I'M CONSCIOUS OF. IT WOULD BE EASIEST TO TRAVEL TOGETHER IF YOU DON'T SMOKE, CAN TOLERATE AN OCCASSIONAL SOUTHERN BBQ RIB STOP, THINK THAT STARS ARE THE BEST GOOD NIGHT WISH: A MOTEL AN OCCASSIONAL TREAT. THIS IS THE OUTLINE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT FILLING IT IN PLEASE CALL HEIDI AT (503) 236-6782 (VOICE OR TTY)

On Labeling

continued from page 2

people assuming that I am. I want recognition and understanding for the important relationships I have with women, for the love and nurturance and growth I share with them. I also feel the need, the responsibility to be political. I want to do something to fight against the heterosexist assumptions that we have to face every day. But how can I make a political statement if I can't even explain who I am? How can I feel the power of crushing people's assumptions about me when I cannot even name myself?

I have yet to solve this problem. The closest I have come to expressing who I am is the word "queer" (as in "Queer Nation"). But I'm afraid that people will still ask, "What kind of a queer are you?" I'm afraid that heterosexuals won't know what I'm talking about. "Bisexual" seems to describe a behavior, "queer" a frame of mind. For me, a political standpoint must go beyond something you think to something you live, and your language should express that. But I have learnt that being political is not as easy as slapping a label on yourself or wearing a gay/lesbian/bisexual t-shirt and marching around. Meaningful political interaction takes more dialogue, more questioning and explaining, to get its point across. We must give up the hope of summing up our sexualities in a slogan, no matter how convenient and comfortable that would be.

1. Simone de Beauvoir, "The formative years; The lesbian," *The Second Sex.* New York: Random House, 1974.

2. Radicalesbians, "The woman-identified woman," *Notes from the third year* (1970), reprinted in A. Koedt, E. Levine, and A. Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism.* New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973.

3. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence, " Signs 5 (4), 1980.

Susanna Trnka is a feminist and a second-year student at U.C. Berkeley majoring in women's studies and anthropology. ❧

Editor's letter

Topics
The topic for the August/September issue will be "Encounters with lesbians" (open to any interpretation you want), and for October/November, "Bisexual couples" (i.e., in which both partners are bi).

Geography

It's exciting to have articles coming in from Princeton, Berkeley, and across the country. Due to an oversight on my part, I didn't note in the last issue that several of our writers were from out of state. Liz Nania, who wrote "Some thoughts on the butch-femme aesthetic," is from Boston; Emily Susan Manning, who wrote "On racism and on anti-sexism," is fromOlympia and Genie Bud, whose piece "Invisible identities, or Another Jewish bisexual woman for peace" elicited a call two days after the newsletter got mailed out from the New Jewish Agenda newsletter asking if they could please reprint it, is from Albany, NY.

Japan

My former co-editor, Gwen Riles, finds herself in Tokyo these days, teaching English and longing for feminist sensibilities. She welcomes cards, letters and diatribes, as well as contacts with any bi or lesbian women, feminists and general queer folk who might be passing through, or even living there. Robyn Ochs sent a note saying she'd heard rumors of a bi group starting in Tokyo, but so far they haven't found it. If you want to get in touch, she can be reached at:

Gwen Riles
Megumi-so 202
5-16-11 Maeno-cho
Itabashi-ku, Tokyo 174, JAPAN
(tel) 81-03-5970-0745

—Beth Reba Weise

SF gay/lesbian paper adds the "B-word"

The San Francisco Bay Times (formerly Coming Up!) added the "B word" to its name in April and officially became "The Gay/lesbian/bisexual newspaper and calendar of events for the Bay Area." The change accompanied a cover story on "The love that dare not speak its name: Bisexuality in the gay/lesbian community." In March, Mindy Spatt and Hildie Kraus' monthly Press Clits column included a comment about the New York weekly gay magazine *OutWeek*'s cover story on "Bisexuals: Deluded closet cases or vanguards of the movement?" The columnists suggested that *OutWeek* should have concentrated more on what gay men and lesbian thought of bisexuals, rather than letting bisexuals talk so much, it being a gay magazine and all.

Bi folk and their allies in San Francisco responed strongly. Two full pages of letters from outraged readers were printed in the April issue, and editor Kim Corsaro, who was one of the lesbians on the lesbian/bisexual dialogue panel at the SF 1990 Conference of Bisexuality, decided to include bisexuals in the paper's name.

The May issue of the paper featured another two pages of letters and a commentary by the editor. Corsaro discussed the rumor in the community that she herself was bi, or involved with a bisexual women. She stated "for the record" that she was a lesbian, and hasn't been involved with a man for 17 years. She also dismissed the rumor that the paper had been "taken over" by bisexuals, and gave the breakdown of the staff as "26 lesbians, 23 gay men, 5 bisexuals and 3 hets." She strongly supported bi visibility, saying "It seems to be a massive contradiction that a movement that cherishes sexual freedom should expect to flourish while systematically suppressing the recognition of another sexual minority. It seems unlikely we can increase our own visibility by repressing anothers."

Locally, Catlin Sullivan of the Seattle Gay News says bisexuals are welcome and encouraged to submit articles and essays to the paper, and are an important voice in our community.

New coordinating committee elected

SBWN's bi-yearly elections were held April 14, with four new members on the coordinating committee! Prior to the elections, Bettykay and Kathleen held a brief ceremony of appreciation for outgoing and continuing coordinating committee members, including lovely Certificates of Appreciation, suitable for framing.

The new lineup for the CC is:

- Education Coordinators: Joan F. and Lisa
- Treasurers: Lucy and Gus
- Keeper of the Mailing List: Lizabeth
- Newsletter: Beth, Lenore, and Anita
- External Relations: Joan H.
- Membership Coordinator: Ellen B.

We're still in need of a fundraiser, and Ellen would be most grateful for help with the bi-phone. It's not too late to get involved. Joan F. is hot on the trail of t-shirt designs for Pride week; anyone who'd like to work on that project should get in touch with her through the bi-phone.

BI POWER

QUEER NATION

Letters

Dear SBWN,

Hello! I am one of the newly admitted to SBWN, thanks to the vote on March 31 regarding transsexuals. I attended the first SBWN Sunday night meeting after the vote, which was April 14. I wish to thank those of you who were there for making me feel welcome and a real part of the group, both at the meeting and at the after-meeting socializing. I had previously attended one Newcomers' Group (my first real contact with SBWN), and thereafter one Sunday night meeting—which, coincidentally, was the night when the meeting was devoted to a discussion and vote on the issue of transsexuals. I took a stand at that time, revealing to the group that I am one of those who fits their use of the term "transsexual." As far as I could tell myself, and also from the feedback I solicited from some women at the meeting, I did not appear to disturb or violate the women's group, in the sense of turning it into "mixed space." I really enjoyed myself both at the meeting and afterward socializing, and look forward to being a worthy and contributing member of SBWN. Thank you very much.

Gabriela Remow

Hi folks,

Trying to get back "on the air" as a bi activist after a very full year in the suburbs from hell (this part of the country was insufferable during the war frenzy, except for some die-hard peaceniks like most of my church). In any case—sign me up for the newsletter again, and maybe one of these centuries I'll make it to a meeting!

Ellen Br.

Dear SBWN,

Your newsletter is so impressive, I just have to get in with your organization! I just left a message for Ellen on the machine. I was watching a video on "love goddesses" of the movies and saw Marlene Dietrich as a nightclub singer.

She wore top-hat and tails, and when she had finished her song, she sauntered out among the tables and with a sly look kissed a young and lovely lady on the mouth! This brought appreciative laughter and applause from the audience! I was shocked and had to re-run it several times. Miss D was very sexy. How unexpected.

Oh—I visited Michael Ambrosino in Portland and he showed me a copy of *Bi any other name*, to which he contributed. It looks wonderful and I can't wait to get one.

Looking forward to the next meeting

MM

Dear Editors,

I'm truly impressed with the quantity, quality and diversity of writing in this newsletter. It is evolving beautifully. As a rather inactive SBWN'er I'm glad for the update and inspiration.

The layout is aesthetically pleasing as is the artwork. I *do* miss Claudia and Beth's cartoon collaborations and hope for more.

What a spread on the"Queer" cartoon is, delightful! Humor is a great teacher and healer, yes?

The Queer Nation ad: PROMOTE BISEXUALITY took me by surprise. I am tickled to see Queer (anything) include the term bisexual; how refreshing!

The word PROMOTE sits uncomfortably. I don't know the ad's intention, be it serious, self-parody or satirical...my question to you as publishers and editors: do *you* really intend being part of a promotion of a sexuality (either as behavior or culture)?

Doesn't it seem at least risky that (bi)sexuality then becomes more didactic rather than an inclusive openness of sexual and affectional expression?

Sexual sub-culture can best serve to nourish and celebrate, *not* to repeat the tired old patterns of the past. Hasn't the promotion of hetero, let alone homosexuality been the essence of what has kept the truth in the shadows, and the human spirit at bay?

While the comparisons of these sexual cultures (sadly separate as it were) is not parallel, I think we can gain from hindsight.

I'd like to promote, er, nourish, the notion of recognizing *emergence* and *allowance*, NOT *advocacy* as a way for people to become fully human and comfortable with themselves and others.

Hope this clicks. Thank you.

Ariel

Editors note: *Actually, they weren't ads from Queer Nations, they were just stickers I picked up in San Francisco. I agree that the notion of promoting any sexual orientation is a little disturbing. But I liked the graphics, and as we live drenched in a culture which promotes heteroseuxality at every turn, I figured a little reminder that all is not as we are lead to believe would be interesting. Thanks for you thoughtful comments. I'll admit that when I first saw them I myself said "But I don't want to promote* anything." *But they do make one think.*

As for Claudia and my's cartoons, we hope to have one for the next issue.

Dear Genie Bud, c/o *North Bi Northwest,*

I received a sample copy of *North Bi Northwest* today and read your column with a sense of wonderment. I, too, am a Jewish bisexual woman. I, too, have at times felt ashamed to admit that I am Jewish, and that I'm bi. It felt so good to read that I am not alone in this experience. For the first time, I realized that there are women out there somewhere who experience the same feelings and fears that I do.

Thank you for having the courage to write your article. Somehow, I don't feel so alone anymore.

In sisterhood, C.M. Toledo, Ohio

G A Y

L E S B I A N

B I S E X U A L

H E T E R O S E X U A L

E T C E T C E T C E T C E T C

D O E S Y O U R V I S I O N

I N C L U D E E V E R Y O N E ?